

Category #16:

The Guidelines should limit the use of cleaning products that contain air fresheners and or fragrances.

State Response:

OGS would support a review and revision of the Guidelines to see if additional health considerations need to be addressed in the area of air fresheners. In the meantime, schools should work to eliminate the source of the odor problem, and not simply treat a symptom, by masking the odor with any products, air freshener or other types of products. In certain cases, simply opening doors or windows may help, but again it may not address the source of the odor or smell, or the reason an air freshener was used in the first place. The focus by schools should be to achieve clean surfaces, which will then be free of odor-generating “left-behind” soils. By eliminating such soil-generated odors, schools will be less likely to use fragrance based chemicals and aerosols.

Frequently Asked Public Comment:**Air Fresheners**

--The guidelines do not address air fresheners.

As noted above, fragrances constitute a significant health threat to asthmatics and other sensitive children and staff. Therefore exposures in schools to chemical air fresheners should be eliminated or reduced to the extent possible. These products typically contain high VOC levels and phthalates, which we have discussed above.

We recommend an additional category be added to Section III “Best Cleaning Management Practices” as follows:

Discourage the use of air fresheners

- The routine use of air fresheners is strongly discouraged. When possible, open doors and windows to circulate fresh air.

(Patricia J. Wood, Executive Director, Grassroots Environmental Education, Port Washington, New York)

--The proposed OGS guidelines and specifications do not have a category for air fresheners. Air fresheners are composed of up to 60 percent volatile organic compounds (VOCs) by weight. These VOCs include ethanol, propane, butane, and acetone, and studies show that children exposed to elevated levels of VOCs have a higher incidence of asthma. Air fresheners are often used in poorly cleaned and poorly ventilated rooms to mask odors that should not be present in the first place. Also, using air fresheners that potentially contain highly toxic and flammable substances in schools where the use of environmentally preferable cleaning products is required subverts legislation that is intended to protect children.

INFORM recommends that air fresheners be considered a cleaning product and be required to meet the same environmental and human health criteria that will apply to other cleaning products under this standard.

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